

the Hon. Gustavo Antonio Gelpí, Jr. to be a United States Circuit Judge in the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, to the seat left vacant by the late Judge Juan R. Torruella. On October 18, 2021, Judge Gelpí was confirmed by the Senate and received his judicial commission on October 19, 2021. I was honored to support his nomination.

The U.S. Circuit Court for the First Circuit hears appeals from the U.S. District Courts of Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Puerto Rico, and Rhode Island. A voice for Puerto Rico—a civil law jurisdiction unlike the remaining common law jurisdictions under the Circuit's purview—is necessary for the fair and impartial application of the law. However, although the population of Puerto Rico is more than double that of each of the other districts in the circuit except for Massachusetts, Judge Gelpí is only the second judge of Hispanic origin and only the second judge from Puerto Rico ever to serve in that Court since it was established by Congress in 1891. I am confident that Judge Gelpí will give Puerto Rico the loud and booming voice in that Court that has been silent since Judge Torruella's passing.

Judge Gelpí served in the United States District Court for the District of Puerto Rico for 20 years, first as a magistrate judge and then as district judge. During this time, he gained a reputation for being stern and serious, but patient and courteous; for having an even temper and a sense of humor; for having common sense and an understanding of the human condition; for being open to consider new legal theories but always following the law.

As he goes on to take his seat in the First Circuit, I would like to remind him of Justice Sandra O'Connor's admonition to judges: "Be independent, be fair, venture to be wise."

"Be independent". Decide matters that come before you impartially, on the basis of facts, in accordance with the law, and without regards to outside influence, self-interest, prejudice, or favoritism.

"Be fair". Stay true to the rule that all persons are equal before the eyes of the law. Make sure that judicial proceedings are conducted fairly and that the rights of the parties are respected. Remember that the appearance of fairness and impartiality is almost as important as the reality of it.

"Venture to be wise." Be humble and recognize that judges do not have monopoly on wisdom and that they will not get it right every time. Approach each case with an open mind and a willingness to learn. Be restrained in your decisions. Seek counsel from your fellow judges.

I thank Judge Gelpí for his years of exemplary service to the people of Puerto Rico and I am certain that, in this new stage of his career, he will continue to serve the people of Puerto Rico with outstanding merit.

I would also like to acknowledge my friend, Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ, who was an invaluable ally in raising bipartisan support for Judge Gelpí's appointment. Because we worked together for the benefit of Puerto Rico, irrespective of party lines, we were able to secure the nomination and confirmation of the most qualified candidate for the job.

RECOGNIZING WHEATFIELD COMMONS AS THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE OF TONAWANDAS' NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR

HON. BRIAN HIGGINS

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2022

Mr. HIGGINS of New York. Madam Speaker, today I would like to honor and recognize Wheatfield Commons, a senior living community providing assisted living and memory care to countless families in Western New York. Since 1958, residents of Erie and Niagara County have been fortunate to receive the family-oriented services of this non-profit.

Wheatfield Commons is nestled in a park-like suburban setting with inviting grounds and courtyards. In warmer weather, residents enjoy taking in the sights from a large covered front porch. Residents are always encouraged to engage with others, and at a place like Wheatfield Commons, there are so many welcoming areas, like the beautifully decorated dining rooms and cozy fireplaces. All of this is a concerted effort to create an accommodating and enriching atmosphere where residents receive the highest quality services and care.

Senior living communities ought to offer our elderly a healthy and dynamic way of living. Undoubtedly, Wheatfield Commons offers a personal approach to delivering support and services while encouraging family members to be actively involved in the care of their loved ones. Without this mission, you can imagine the potential lack of support and interpersonal connections of senior residents and their families. Luckily, Wheatfield Commons delivers for its residents.

Organizations like Wheatfield Commons do not receive an appropriate amount of praise and attention for their critical efforts, so I am pleased that their hard work can be recognized in this way. Our communities are best served when our seniors are receiving proper care and attention.

Madam Speaker, I am honored to recognize the irreplaceable Wheatfield Commons and their devoted staff. I would like to congratulate them on this well-deserved achievement.

RECOGNIZING THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE HISTORIC SAM SHORTLINE EXCURSION TRAIN

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, November 14, 2022

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the Historic Savannah, Americus, & Montgomery (SAM) Shortline Excursion Train on the 20th anniversary of its first public run on October 26, 2002.

While the current SAM Shortline Excursion Train had its maiden voyage only twenty years ago, its ancestor and namesake, the Savannah, Americus, & Montgomery (SAM) Railroad Company, was founded during the 1880s by Americus attorney and banker, Colonel Samuel Hugh Hawkins. The Americus region saw its first population and construction booms with the arrival of Southwestern Railroad in the early 1850s. Following the American Civil

War, the people of southwest Georgia saw the railroad as a bright new opportunity for economic development and prosperity. But Southwestern and its lessee, the Central Railroad & Banking Company of Georgia, held a monopoly on the railroads and many in Americus began to feel the effects of exorbitant and discriminatory rates, thus contributing to a decline in local trade. When surrounding cities began proposing new rail lines to bypass Americus, Colonel Hawkins led the charge to construct new lines that would pass directly through the city, leading local investors to organize the Americus, Preston & Lumpkin Railroad (AP&L) in 1884 to ensure that Americus would continue to dominate the region's trade and continue to grow into the Twentieth Century. In 1888, Hawkins and his associates decided to extend the AP&L both east and west to create a direct route between Montgomery, Alabama, and Savannah. Later that year, the 265-mile project would be renamed as the Savannah, Americus, Montgomery Railway, known simply as "The SAM."

Before the SAM's mainline was constructed through the city, the lands surrounding Americus in Sumter County were largely undeveloped and sparsely populated. Following the boom in trade and wealth brought by the SAM, several new towns were founded throughout the region, including Richland, Cordele, Vidalia, and Lyons among others. The first new community, however, was created in Sumter County a few miles west of Americus near an older community called the Plains of Dura. Once SAM's main rail line approached the Plains of Dura community, residents of surrounding settlements began moving closer to the railroad and eventually chartered the town of Plains—the renowned home of famous Georgia peanut farmer and our 39th President, Jimmy Carter. Once fully developed, SAM Railway became the lifeblood of the city of Americus and spurred a second construction and population boom that would reshape the city as a powerful economic nexus in the region. During this period, the city saw the founding of several vital local businesses, such as the Americus Guano Company, the Americus Oil Company, the Americus Illuminating and Power Company, the Americus Construction Company, the Americus Grocery Company, as well as the town's crowning achievement—the Windsor Hotel.

Despite its transformational success, SAM was not immune from the economic struggles of the era, and in 1893, amid a financial panic, Colonel Hawkins and his associates were forced to sell their beloved SAM Railway Company to John Skelton of Richmond, Virginia who would reorganize the company as the Georgia and Alabama Railway in 1895. Samuel Hawkins went on to lose nearly \$1 million of his own money in an unsuccessful attempt to keep the railroad under local control. Nevertheless, the railroad he initially founded proved vital to the southwest Georgia community as it provided jobs, trade, freight transportation, as well as an economic engine for the budding towns and cities across southwest Georgia and Alabama.

At the start of the Twenty-first Century, local residents of the southwest Georgia region developed plans to revive the former SAM Railway as a passenger excursion route. By 2002, the excursion founders had recovered and refurbished several state-owned vintage railcars to seat up to eighty people. They rebranded